April 4, 2008

**Obey IN Stevens Point for UPDATE
ON new GIS Training Center At UWSP**

STEVENS POINT, WI - Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) was at UW-Stevens Point today for a briefing on the new Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Training Center that the University is establishing in the Department of Geography/Geology.

Obey secured over $1.7 million last year to help the University establish the Center.

"GIS skills are highly marketable, and there's no better way to learn those skills than hands on training with the latest tools. So I'm glad we were able to secure the funds to help the University establish this Center and I'm happy to be here today to see it first hand," said Obey, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

A geographic information system (GIS) is a computer-based tool for mapping and analyzing things that exist and events that happen on earth. GIS technology integrates common database operations such as query and statistical analysis with the unique visualization and geographic analysis benefits offered by maps.

Regionally and nationally, there is a pressing demand for professionals educated in the use of GIS and spatial analysis techniques.   These technologies can be used to assess damage along the path of a forest fire, conduct environmental site analyses, track wolf populations, develop community land-use plans, track commercial freight operations, and interactively track crime. Even the medical profession is using GIS to study the spread of disease, such as the West Nile virus. It is estimated that over 500,000 professionals use GIS in their jobs, with that number climbing by about 15% per year.

In addition to providing traditional students greater access to GIS training, the Center is intended to allow the University to provide a GIS certificate program for non-traditional students employed in businesses throughout the region, as well as advanced GIS training for professionals currently in the field. It is the only such program available in Northern and Central Wisconsin.

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